

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 02363 141611Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----141615Z 035546 /45

P R 141214Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2752
INFO USMISSION NATO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2363

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, PFOR, PARM, UR, IT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN COMMENT ON SOVIET SUGGESTION ON "PRELIMINARY
MEETING" ON NUCLEAR NON-FIRST USE

REF: A. STATE 26384, B. USNATO 750, C. ROME 1904

1. PER REF. A, WE REVIEWED WITH MFA QUESTION OF SOVIET
NON-FIRST-USE PROPOSAL AND ITALIAN VIEWS THEREON.

2. ACCORDING FERDINANDO SALLEO, OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR NATO
AFFAIRS, AMERICAN CHARG'S FEBRUARY 4 LUNCH WITH DIRGEN
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS GARDINI (REF. C) FIRST SURFACED
WHAT MFA CONSIDERS TO BE A MISUNDERSTANDING AS TO ITALIAN
STANCE ON NON-FIRST-USE PROPOSAL. SALLEO READ TO EMBOFF
VERTATIM TEXT OF FIVE PAGE INSTRUCTIONAL TELEGRAM, DRAFTER
BY GARDINI, TO CONCERNED ITALIAN MISSIONS INCLUDING
WASHINGTON WITH INTENTION OF CLARIFYING GOI VIEWS.

3. TELEGRAM EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS "NO QUESTION" OF
AMENDING OR REVERSING LAST DECEMBER'S NATO
MINISTERIAL REJECTION OF SOVIET PROPOSAL. HOWEVER,
FONMIN FORLANI APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DEEPLY IMPRESSED
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BY GROMYKO'S TREBLE REPETITION IN MOSCOW, "ONCE IN
THE PRESENCE OF BREZHNEV", THAT SOVIETS INTEND TO
PURSUE NON-FIRST-USE DESPITE NATO'S QUICK REJECTION.
SINCE IT CAN BE TAKEN AS A GIVEN THAT WESTERN POWERS,
NATO MOST PARTICULARLY, WILL HAVE TO DEAL SOVIET
INITIATIVE IN OTHER FORA, SUCH AS THE UN OR POSSIBLE
MBFR, ITALY BELIEVES NATO SHOULD BE PREPARED WITH A

CONCERTED RESPONSE BASED ON CAREFUL ANALYSIS.

4. ITALY RECOGNIZES INNATE UNACCEPTABILITY OF NON-FIRST-USE, IN TERMS OF ERODING THE DETERRENT AND BLURRING THE DESIRED FOCUS AT BELGRADE. THE ITALIAN SUGGESTION, THEREFORE, IS NOT TO REVISE THE MINISTERIAL PRONOUNCEMENT BUT TO STUDY HOW FURTHER SOVIET PRESSURES MIGHT BE HANDLED "IN THE VAST AND ETERNAL DEBATE ON GENERAL AND COMPLETE CONTROLLED DISARMAMENT". EVEN GRANTING THE OBVIOUS PROPAGANDISTIC BENEFITS ON NON-FIRST-USE FOR WARSAW PACT STATES, THE WEST MIGHT FIND WAYS TO TURN IT TO ADVANTAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN AGREED WESTERN FRAMEWORK ON DISARMAMENT ISSUES.

5. GOING BEYOND THE INSTRUCTIONAL TELEGRAM, SALLEO GRANTED THAT A NATO STUDY MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO GIVE UNWARRANTED "STATUS" TO NON-FIRST-USE PROPOSAL. TO THAT END, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE AT SOME POINT TO LOOK AT IT IN THE NATO STRUCTURE, WITHOUT BEING HIGHLIGHTED AS A SPECIFIC SUBJECT OF STUDY, BY COMBINING IT WITH RELATED MATTERS UNDER A BROADER RUBRIC SUCH AS "CONSIDERATION OF DISARMAMENT ISSUED IN THE UNITED NATIONS". SALLEO DID NOT ATTRIBUTE MUCH IMPORTANCE AS TO WHERE IN NATO THE STUDY MIGHT BE DONE BUT FELT THE POLAD'S WOULD BE BETTER THAN IN DISARMAMENT EXPERTS.

6. COMMENT: EMBOFF HAD CLEAR IMPRESSION FROM SALLEO THAT GOI WAS SOMEWHAT WURPRISED AT U.S. CONCERN RE STUDY IN NATO OF NON-FIRST-USE, AND CONSIDERED IT WAS BASED ON CONFIDENTIAL

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MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE ITALIAN RATIONALE. NEVERTHELESS, AS REF. B SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED, GOI HAD DECIDED NOT TO PUSH FURTHER FOR A STUDY AT THIS POINT, BELIEVING THAT THE NEED WILL SOON SURFACE, IF NOT AT VIENNA IN MBFR TALKS THEN CERTAINLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE SSOD. WE ANTICIPATE THE SUBJECT WILL BE INCORPORATED IN MFA RESPONSE TO OUR EARLIER USOUNDINGS (ROME 2265) ON ITALIAN OUTLOOK ON SSOD PREPARATION.

BEAUDRY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, NONAGGRESSION AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME02363
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770052-0152
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770244/aaaabmvf.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7358cec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 26384, 77 ROME 1904
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3327425
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITALIAN COMMENT ON SOVIET SUGGESTION ON \"PRELIMINARY MEETING\" ON NUCLEAR NON-FIRST USE
TAGS: PFOR, PARM, MNUC, UR, IT, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7358cec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009